

Sociology 305: Quantitative Research Methods
Tuesday & Thursday 1:30pm – 2:55pm
Rangeview 244

Instructor: John T. Lang

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 4:30pm – 6:00pm, and by appointment

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Course Website: <http://moodle.oxy.edu>

INTRODUCTION

This course introduces quantitative research methods and statistical analysis from a sociological perspective. We will address the major components of the research process and will stress the importance of critical thinking in all matters numerical. We will cover measures of central tendency, the normal curve, probability, frequency distributions, correlation, and regression. We will work on thinking, writing, and speaking about quantitative data.

By the end of the course, you will have mastered basic statistical concepts and techniques and learned how to write about quantitative data in a concise and cogent manner. You will also be able to critically examine and evaluate common (mis)uses of statistical concepts.

“There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.”

—Benjamin Disraeli quoted by Mark Twain

“Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please.”

—Mark Twain quoted by Rudyard Kipling

Please Note

Prerequisite: Sociology 101.

Open to Sociology majors/minors only; first year students may not enroll in this class.

This course may be used toward the Core Science/Mathematics requirement.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

You will be expected to use a calculator frequently in the class. It does not have to be fancy. It should be something other than the calculator on your cell phone.

The required textbook is available at the Occidental College Bookstore. You can also find it online at your favorite book seller.

Salkind, Neil J. 2007. *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics, 3rd Edition*.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Paperback.

ISBN: 978-1412951500

Companion Website: <http://www.sagepub.com/salkindstudy/>

Errata and Corrections: <http://www.statisticsforpeople.com/Corrections.html>

GRADING

I do not give extra-credit assignments, nor will I allow make-ups on the exams without a superb, legitimate explanation (bring me medical records, phone numbers of surviving relatives, etc.).

Weddings, personal holidays, oversleeping, etc. are not acceptable excuses for missing exams.

Drop the course now if there is a conflict between the test days and your personal schedule. To be blunt, it is not to your advantage to miss my scheduled tests.

I will base your final grade on the following:

60% = Assignments

40% = Exams

Attendance/Participation

Our time together is brief and we have a wealth of ideas to exchange and explore in that limited period. I expect you to come to class on time and remain here until class is over. You may miss 2 class sessions without penalty. After that, for each missed class the your final course grade will drop one fraction of a letter grade. For example, if your work is above average and earns you a B, that absence will cause your final grade to drop to a B-. For every additional absence, your grade will continue to fall by the same fraction of a letter grade.

Arriving late or departing early twice equals one absence. I have this policy to encourage students to attend class and to do well in the course. I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. You are, therefore, strongly encouraged not to miss class carelessly because of the possibility of unexpected or unavoidable absences during the semester. No matter the reason, it is always your responsibility to contact other students to learn what you've missed and to get notes.

Assignments – 60%

There will be four assignments, each worth 15% of your final grade. These assignments will require you to apply the techniques learned in class. Late papers will be penalized a full letter grade for each day late; those not turned in within one week of due date are still required but will not receive points.

Exams – 40%

There are two scheduled exams each worth 20% of your final grade. I will base these exams on your assigned reading, class discussions, and exercises. They will be closed book. Calculators will be required. The final exam will be cumulative.

COURSE GRADES

Do NOT count on a curve. I will assign letter grades for the entire course as follows:

93.0 and higher = A	73.0 to 76.99 = C
90.0 to 92.99 = A-	70.0 to 72.99 = C-
87.0 to 89.99 = B+	67.0 to 69.99 = D+
83.0 to 86.99 = B	63.0 to 66.99 = D
80 to 82.99 = B-	60 to 62.99 = D-
77.0 to 79.99 = C+	59.99 and lower = F.

Letter grades in this class have the following meaning:

- A *Outstanding performance.* You have demonstrated very thorough knowledge and understanding of all the material, truly superior critical thinking, and expressed insightful and original thoughts clearly. You have completed all required assignments and they have been among the best in the class.
- B *Good performance.* You have demonstrated solid knowledge and understanding of the material and good critical thinking. You have also shown the ability to express your ideas clearly. You have completed all required assignments and they have been of good quality.

- C *Satisfactory performance.* You have demonstrated basic knowledge and understanding of the major concepts taught in the class and some critical thinking. You have completed all or most of the required assignments and they have routinely been free of significant problems.
- D *Deficient performance.* You have only acquired a limited understanding of the class material. You have failed to complete all the required assignments and they have routinely had serious problems.
- F *Failure.* You have failed to learn a sufficient proportion of the basic concepts and ideas taught in the class. You have failed to complete many required assignments and they have routinely had serious problems.

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I will hold you responsible for the information in this syllabus, so I expect you to read it, understand it, and ask questions about anything you don't understand.

Office Hours: I hold three official office hours each week. I also encourage you to make an appointment outside of office hours or come by my office anytime to see if I'm available. I am happy to discuss class concepts, college more generally, musings about majors, future planning, or graduate school.

Feedback: I love getting feedback on my teaching and how the class is going. I value your input and I am willing to make changes to the class according to your preferences. Please share with me any comments, suggestions, and ideas you may have, and help me make this a great class. If you would like to do so anonymously, you can type and print out a note and drop it in my mailbox on the 3rd floor of Middle Swan.

Class Demeanor: While we may find ourselves disagreeing, we must do so with respect, a commitment to hearing what others have to say, and a willingness to think and rethink our own positions. Personal insults have no place in the college classroom.

Technology in Class: Please turn off your cell phones when you come to class. Similarly, text messaging will not be tolerated in class. You are welcome to bring your laptop to class and use it to take notes, access readings we're discussing, and the like. You are not welcome to surf the web, check email, or otherwise perform non-class-related activities during class. Here's my best advice: If you aren't using it to perform a task specifically related to what we are doing in class at that very moment, put it away.

Special Accommodations/Learning Differences: Any student eligible for and needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability should talk to me sometime in the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes a learning disability, I encourage you to contact the friendly folks over at the Center for Academic Excellence (x2849).

Assignments: A hard copy of all papers/assignments must be handed in at the start of class on the scheduled date. I do not accept assignments via email. Late assignments are docked 1 grade per day. Computer and printing problems are not a good excuse for missing a deadline. Make sure to print your papers early enough to be able to address any problems before class. Keep a paper and electronic copy of everything you hand in until you receive your course grade.

Academic Integrity: As is always the case, you are responsible for your own work. If you find yourself questioning whether you have documented or cited your sources properly, it is your responsibility to come see me about these issues prior to submitting an assignment. If you are thinking about submitting work that is not your own due to pressure, frustration, perfectionism, or any other reason, please talk to me. I am here to help you resolve these issues before they become a problem for your academic career. Academic integrity violations, including plagiarism, will be taken very seriously. A

description of Occidental's academic ethics policies is available in the Student Handbook and on the following webpage: <http://www.oxy.edu/x8000.xml>

Readings

Your most basic duty in this class is to read all of the assigned texts. Be sure to read the calendar of class meetings, readings, assignments, papers, and exams. All readings are due on the day they are listed. You must have read them carefully, taken notes, and be prepared to pass a quiz and discuss them intelligently.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Although I will do my best to keep us on schedule, it is possible that we will make some adjustments during the semester. I will give as much notice - both in class and on the course website - when changes are necessary.

JANUARY

- 19 Welcome to the class!
- 21 Salkind: Chapter 1, Statistics or Sadistics?
Salkind: Chapter 2, Means to an End
- 26 Salkind: Chapter 3, Vive la Différence
Salkind: Chapter 4, A Picture Really Is Worth a Thousand Words
- 28 Handout: Assignment #1

FEBRUARY

- 2 Salkind: Chapter 5, Ice Cream and Crime
- 4 Salkind: Chapter 6, Just the Truth
- 9 Assignment #1 Due
Salkind: Chapter 7, Hypotheticals and You
- 11 Salkind: Chapter 7, Hypotheticals and You
- 16 Handout: Assignment #2
Catch Up & Review
- 18 Salkind: Chapter 8, Are Your Curves Normal?
- 23 Salkind: Chapter 8, Are Your Curves Normal?
- 25 Salkind: Chapter 8, Are Your Curves Normal?

MARCH

- 2 Assignment #2 Due
Catch Up & Review
- 4 Exam #1
- 9 Spring Break
- 11 Spring Break
- 16 Salkind: Chapter 9, Significantly Significant
- 18 Salkind: Chapter 9, Significantly Significant
- 23 Handout: Assignment #3
- 25 Salkind: Chapter 10, t(ea) for Two
- 30 Salkind: Chapter 10, t(ea) for Two

APRIL

- 1 Salkind: Chapter 11, t(ea) for Two (Again)
- 6 Salkind: Chapter 11, t(ea) for Two (Again)
- 8 Assignment #3 Due
Catch Up and Review

- 13 Handout: Assignment #4
- 15 Salkind: Chapter 14, Cousins or Just Good Friends?
- 20 Salkind: Chapter 14, Cousins or Just Good Friends?
- 22 Salkind: Chapter 15, Predicting Who'll Win the Super Bowl
- 27 Salkind: Chapter 15, Predicting Who'll Win the Super Bowl
- 29 Catch up and Review
Assignment #4 Due

Final Exam – TBA

I'm looking forward to a great semester!